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Fredrick Töben Reports:

'Palestine, the Homeland of Palestinians' The 5th International Conference on Palestine-Felestin Intifada 1-2 October 2011

Although I have been visiting Iran annually since 1999 I still find such visits re-invigorating because on the one hand the people are so hospitable while on the other they are simply doing their thing, almost as if of necessity.

I thought about this when in a discussion I was asked what prison was like for me. My standard reply is that anyone who has had boarding school experience and gone through basic military service will find prison that next step – and then I have added the post-prison step as that of entering an old people's home, or a hospice where a totally controlled environment exists.

And so after 12 years of experiencing Iranian life I stumble on to the fact that in Farsi there is no concept for boarding school. This has significant implications as far as the social structure is concerned. As far as education is concerned Iranians have not as yet gone down the path of dissembling, of cant, of developing a rationale that is pure hypocrisy – or, I would call it false consciousness.

I say this because in England, for example, boarding schools are sold as a virtue for the elite when in fact it is actually an admission of a failed home life. Iranian society still has an in-tact conceptual framework where the primacy of the family remains uncontested.

With this thought in mind, and of course, with the addition that the religion of Islam is absolutely embraced wherefrom Iranian civil society springs, then the structure and proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Palestinian Intifada makes admirable sense.

Attendees were put up in two of Teheran's five-star hotels, at the Estaghlal, the former Hilton, and at the Laleh Hotel, the former Intercontinental, which Pan Am Airlines helped build – and where I stayed. Both hotels also catered for its guests, and the conference dinner banquet hosted by His Excellency, Dr Ali Larijani, Speaker of the Islamic Parliament of Iran was held at the Estaghlal.

Bearing in mind that transport to and from the conference venue occurred during peak-hour traffic, for some visitors it was a surprise that we all got there on time. The extra VIPs had their Mercedes Benz fleet of cars take them there under prominent police escort while we travelled on luxury coaches, especially the driver of that Volvo bus managed to hurtle along the bus-only lane but then was stuck behind one of the regular buses that use this separated one-lane of the four lane highway through the city.



Young policemen and army recruits ensure that basic security outside the hotel is guaranteed.



If you are quick you'll get your choice of seat at the front but the buses are mostly Volvo tourers with comforts so it doesn't matter where you sit during this half to one-hour trip to the conference centre.

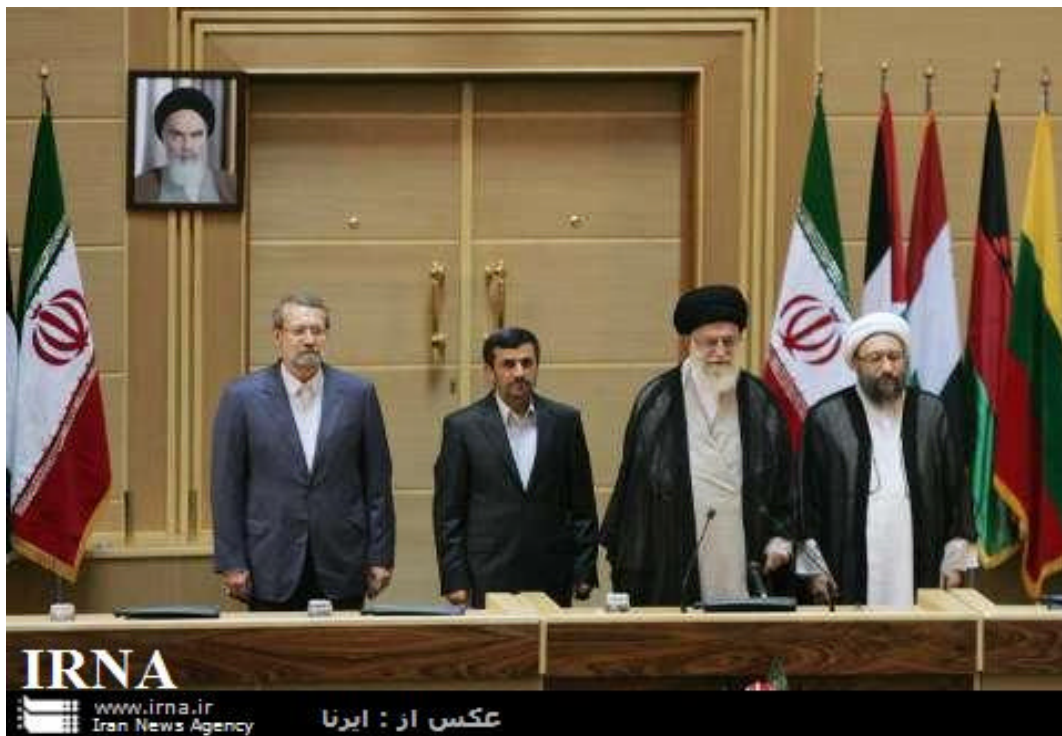
A policeman on motor bike ensures a clear road for our bus to move through heavy traffic in record time.

During peak hour it is not wise for touring buses to use the commuter bus lane at the left. Notice the the three remaining lanes often become four or five as drivers jostle for position. Throughout these trips I did not see a single accident. It is said that Iranian drivers are totally compromising because an accident is a nuisance

for both, none of this 'I had right-of-way' stuff. They have a joke about it: An Iranian is abroad and wishes to apply for his car licence. The licensing officer asks: 'Where did you learn to drive?' Answer: 'Teheran'. The Iranian is handed a licence without a test-drive. Security at the Conference Centre is not overtly visible but again young armed fellows stand around and we can feel safe.



The almost 900 participants from 70+ countries make up a colourful display of differing ethnic and cultural traditions.



- and surprise, surprise, when it was time to begin proceedings at 10 am, on time, it is announced that the Supreme Leader has arrived and a brass band vigorously plays the National Anthem, followed by recitations from Holy Quran. Such recitations are an art form – and the gentleman reciting could have been Prof Reza Khaji's younger brother.

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I am reminded of the confusion that the western media spreads concerning the Iranian political system. When in December 2006 Iran hosted the first-ever International Holocaust Conference in Teheran, I recall that on the second day reports came through the Internet that President Ahmadinejad had the night before addressed university students and some kind of explosion occurred with protesting students shouting 'down with the dictator'. This slogan has been generated by western media outlets whenever they wish to effect regime change – as occurred recently in Egypt and north African countries. Little did the western media know it was falling into a typical Zionist trap of ignorance because Iranian's

leadership structure is a little more complicated and the concept 'dictator' does not fit here. Then during the recent 'green revolution', that George Soros funded soft-regime change attempt in Iran led by Moussavi, the same 'down with the dictator' slogan appeared. Fortunately, Iranians are not as gullible as those in the west who still swallow the Zionist propaganda that consists of 'freedom and democracy'.

The Speaker, Dr Larinjani, opens the proceedings by reflecting on the Palestinian martyrs who have resisted recent Zionist aggression, and he reminds us how fruitless discussions have been these past 60 years. It is hoped, he says, the recent popular uprisings in the region will assist the Palestinian cause.



Behrouz Mehri / AFP/Getty Images

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei sets the Iranian agenda on Iran's attitude adopted towards the Palestine problem.

When the western putch was instigated against Iran through the Moussavi Green Revolution the President was labelled a "dictator", much like what the western media did with the Libyan leader before his downfall and execution by the rabble that the Anglo-American-French Zionists had cobbled together under the NATO airstrike umbrella.

But they got it wrong with the President's function – and the dictator designation did not fit reality and so the millions of US dollar pumped into Iran to effect a regime change failed.

In any case, most Iranians are wary of foreign intervention because they have had that kind of experience before when they had the Shah imposed on them who then enabled the continued looting of Iran's resources to continue.

All this changed in 1979 – and though basic poverty still prevails today Iran has succeeded in gaining a large measure of autarky.



Then Supreme Leader delivers his address wherein he reminds attendees what this two-day conference is all about. The parameters are set – there is to be no proposal for a two-state solution for the simple reason that Palestinians don't need a state because it already exists but this state has been occupied for over 63 years by a racist Zionist regime.

He calls on all Muslim nations to support Palestine and to oppose the 'fictitious mosaic state' that has as a stranger to Palestine, through massacre, tyranny and forceful removal, established its dominance over the land. It has become 'a military outpost of the West', which uses 'this fictitious state dagger' to gain influence and dominance of the world'. He reminds us that after six decades there are still Palestinians living in camps. But now things are developing on account of the 'Islamic awakening – a new chapter in Islamic Ummah – must put an end to backwardness and weakness of Muslims – some treacherous Arab states – the downfall of Egyptian President Mubarak is a divine victory – now the US is confused and bogged down'.

If the UN accepted the two-state solution, then this would mean accepting the Zionist regime – 'perpetuation of a cancerous tumour' and 'complying with Zionists' demand for the recognition of a Zionist government on Palestinian land ...That means spoiling the rights of the Palestinian nation and ignoring the historical rights of the Palestinian refugees and even threatening the rights of the Palestinians who live in the 1948 territories'. He also stressed that words are not enough but with 'action and wisdom and patience' we can expect solutions that will heal the wounds. There is to be 'no wars or migration of Jews into the sea' and he proposed that a referendum on Palestine be conducted,

decided on by Muslims, Christians and Jews – not by foreign migrants to Palestine.

It will be essential to choose a political system and government that will decide 'what to do with the migrants who came to Palestine. But he warned, 'don't expect usurper Zionists to give in to this – the existence of Zionists is terrorism, and the downfall of the Zionist regime is the downfall of a European/United States puppet regime'.

The Supreme Leader then mentions the US President's remarks that Israel is a red line for the US. The Supreme Leader questions: 'Who is behind this red line – money, Zionists?' He continues: "When the US people realize you have succumbed to Zionist masters and money, what will you think people will do to you? The red line will be broken by Palestinian and Muslim nations – it will be true thoughts from men, women and Islam – not missiles, though they also do their duties'. [Note that the transcription of this and other speeches relies on what the interpreter says.]

The Supreme Leader's speech ends with a shout from an individual sitting in the gallery above, in English:

'From the river to the sea – Palestine will be free'.

The Supreme Leader and his entourage slowly move through the body of the hall to the exit, all the while attending to the various well-wishers and petitioners crowding around him. It takes just on ten minutes when Dr Larinjani then calls the assembly to order so proceedings can continue as scheduled.

Now it's full-on with delegates from numerous countries espousing their views – all focusing on the conference's theme: 'Palestine, the Homeland of Palestinians'. The

lively and dynamic presentations moved the audience. Unlike in the free and democratic west where speakers use measured tones, here at times it reminded me of a political rally when speakers passionately described the horrendous suffering Israel inflicts on the Palestinians. It is mentioned that Palestinians living in other Arabic-speaking countries also deserve to be remembered for the sacrifice they have endured since their expulsion from their homeland in 1948, which is still in progress. Perhaps readers ought to know that the big divide in Iranian public discourse is this: Everything is politics and everything is religion. We still have that ideal of separation of powers, which many Australians is indeed just a fiction.

The various delegates, many themselves speakers of their parliaments, express solidarity with the basic aim: Collective efforts should be made to speak with one voice and only accept one Palestine with its capital in Al Quds. Reports are also given of the current tragedy Palestinians are suffering, and that they are not looking for a homeland because they have a homeland – Palestine, and it is every Muslim's moral and legal duty to support such aspirations, namely, the unassailable right of return without making any concession to the enemy. As an MP from Iraq put it: 'Palestine belongs to 57 Arab states and one billion Muslims. It is the birth place of divine people and martyrs. Palestine is holy land for us and the enemies of Palestinians are enemies of the entire international community'.

A stronger view is expressed by an Egyptian MP who elaborates on "Europeans are united with its common

market but there is no spiritual commonality, and there is division created by Israel which must be forced to leave the Muslim lands – forger closer ties and become a dagger in the hearts of the enemy.

The Afghan delegate emphasises that he supports Palestinian President Abbas' claim for Palestinian statehood because it is 'compatible with universal norms and laws'. He recalls on the recent history of invasion, the Soviet Union, and now sees the imminent exit of US forces. 'The Zionist advocates of human rights accept the killing of women and children and so their reputation is tainted – and the greater Israel dream will never be realized. He mentions that now the Israelis get the Palestinians to pay for their own home destruction. He sends greetings to the Palestinians in Israeli jails, one Palestinian lady received an 1800-year prison sentence and her will is still not broke.

The Algerian parliamentarian says the world knows Israel is destroying the Palestinian identity, then regards itself as a defender of freedom and human rights.

The Parliamentary Speaker from the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka raises the issue about a possible co-existence between Israel and Palestine that is the two-state solution as adopted by UN Resolution 242. [-need to check this detail – no time from here –]. He also advocates a nuclear-weapon-free Middle East.

That evening the Speaker of Iran's Parliament, H E Dr Ali Larijani hosts a Dinner Reception, and my cursory count indicated about 800 individuals attended.



...and my simple food taste - I enjoy my chippies ...

DAY TWO – Sunday 2 October 2011

The second day begins with the specialized panels meeting to thrash out issues that are to be put before the participants, which will result in a Final Declaration. Five panels met for ninety minutes to consider issues – so the program: Parliamentary, political parties and groups, NGOs-Non Government Organisations, Ummas and religious leaders and media.

Whatever is raised during the discussions is recorded, always within the overarching premise: The Palestinians are not looking for a homeland because they already have a home – Palestine. By the way, a more correct pronunciation is Felestin. Remember how Bombay and Peking only relatively recently turned to Beijing and Mumbai?

I was one of the four men that made up the NGO panel and this enabled me to mention the role Holocaust has in de-railing Palestinian aspirations because Holocaust is one of Israel's primary propaganda weapons that in western democracies deflects from the genocide Israel is committing against Palestinians.

Another Delegate from Afghanistan stresses the atrocities Jews have been inflicting on Palestinians since 1948.

The Mauretanian Delegate stresses how 'the US turns a blind eye to the terror of the false regime – double standards – heroic peoples of Gaza still blockaded by the criminal Zionists'. He suggests the Muslim world should withdraw its money out of western banks.

Another speaker suggests that the Oslo Accord has been a disaster for Palestinians because since then more and more Jewish settlements appear. He says that it is not possible to make peace with the Zionist regime it wants to control and dominate everything. Therefore, no concessions, take up arms and no retreat from Palestinian territory, which is 'the only way to unity – we will liberate all occupied territory' and release the thousands of Palestinian prisoners in jails.

An Egyptian Delegate talks about the Great Satan – the USA – and how former President Mubarak had 'lots of private bank accounts in foreign banks'.

A 40-minute video conference call from HAMAS representative – [name??] is well received especially because he gave an element of hope by calling on the Apartheid struggle in South Africa. He mentions there are over 8,000 Palestinians in prisons – and he'll never surrender to the Zionist regime nor to the US. The only solution is a national dialogue to develop a united policy against resistance – armed resistance, and to have peace and stability in other Arab states.

A Palestinian speaker suggests that President Abbas had better realize that 'Palestine is not a business present to the New York Stock Exchange'. He then says that there'll be no-one 'thrown into the sea' because a referendum and not war should decide the fate of Palestine.

Then, just after 5pm while sitting at my desk, a man wearing a Muslim cap approaches me:

'I heard you talk about the Holocaust. Have you got a business card? he gruffly asks in an American-Canadian accent, glaring me in the face. Were I on the victim gravy train I would have felt threatened by this fellow's behaviour.

'Are you hunting Holocaust deniers?' I respond.

'Yes', he responds: 'What's your name?'

'Fredrick Töben, and yours?'

'Ken Stone', he gruffs and walks off.

Later, during the President's speech I see him shrinking in his seat, almost pathetically so and my initial instinct asserts itself – I feel sorry for the man who has been living on a lie for so long and who knows that believing in lie, as is the Holocaust, destroys one's soul. Much can be said about the Germans and other nations – most NATO-member countries – who have a law enforcing the belief in such an historical lie. I also further understand the significance of President Ahmadinejad exposing this Holocaust lie, and recently the 9/11 lie at the UN. It is a liberation from a dogma, an ideology, as much as the world was liberated from the Talmudic-Communist-Marxist dialectic materialism ideology when the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991.



From my seat the view into the Conference Centre Hall.

A Patriarch from Denmark states that the whole issue of Palestine is a matter of principle 'for the sake of humanity'.

The Delegate from Columbia suggested it is not going to work to make Zionist Jews out of Palestinians because that leads to schizophrenia, as Einstein and Levi-Strauss had commented on Jerusalem, the Heavenly City, should be internationalised where all three Abrahamic religions should take it in turns governing it, 'otherwise Palestine is finished'.

The Speaker from the Lebanese Parliament raises the issue of a new Intifada against the Zionists because they are continuing to Judaicise Palestinian lands. "I salute all those who have been supporting the powers that opposed British and French occupation. We come from the land fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with the

Palestinians, resisting the 2006 Zionist invasion with the support of Iran, opposing the colonial conspiracy of building up divisions and discord in religion and culture: between Suni and Shiah; between Arabs and Iranians'. He also states that the Tunisian uprising is one side of the coin, against the other of tribal divisions.

Then it is time for the Closing Session where the five committees present their findings. Dr Larinjani has a little trying task when he invites further commentary from the floor before the reports are put to a vote and adopted by the assembly. Some individuals take the opportunity of making long speeches, which he delicately truncates by asking the speakers to re-focus on the points that they wish to see added to the final protocol. Not surprisingly, the Final Declaration is read out and adopted.



Overcome with tearful joy the recipient of an award stands before the President and Speaker of Parliament.

The session ends by all conference participants paying their respect to the Palestinian Martyrs and Iranian War Veterans. In recognition of their service and of their suffering men and women walk up to the President and Speaker to receive their citation and a gift – and for the men it is also a warm comforting Presidential embrace while the women stand before him. In the above photo, both the President's and the lady's tears are visible to the audience. This is not a fake Hollywood movie set where everything is staged. But that's what makes the Iranians so normal – this shared empathetic grief heals wounds. That is also the difference between those who scoff at sentimentality or the showing of emotions and those who I would consider to be emotional mutations – those who only derive a kick in life by being a control freak, nasty ones at that. I have labelled such individuals as PRIME UGLIES because their thoughts, their very being is jarring and ugly, while they gloat over another's misfortune, and eagerly attempt to bring about more misfortunes for others. It is also the essence of materialism and its outgrowth of predatory

capitalism. We see its inexorable end-game in the current world unrest that cries out against such excesses. The world is rich enough and there is plenty for all of us – but the distribution mechanisms have perverted a just allocation of what humans have invented and created.

Presidential Address

I took some notes that I reproduce in part below, which I hope conveys the tone of his speech, but please note it is only the interpreters' translations that I hear.

The President, Dr Mahmoud Ahmadinejad delivers his address without notes, and he spells out the two issues that have become taboo topics in 'free and democratic' western countries and that are only talked about in whispers because public criticism is not permitted nor tolerated: Holocaust and Zionism.

He begins by stating that the fundamental questions that need to be asked about the Palestinians and 'the fictitious Zionist regime are so important and that have so many angles we could sit together for hours'.



The President, Dr Ahmadinejad, speaking freely and not reading from a prepared text.

He asks: 'Why is the question of Palestine important? Is it an Arab problem or dispute between some Arabs, between western governments or some Jews that have occupied Palestinian lands?'

He concludes that it is all those but not only because for over 500 years a powerful people enslaved and exploited the world, and now one by one these nations are liberating themselves from slavery and colonialism. He reminds us that for hundreds of years Europe and its 72 nations had been fighting among themselves. Before the twentieth century, he says, it was impossible to find in Europeans 'five consecutive years without a war'.

Then with the two world wars had over 70 million killed and many more wounded and displaced, and these disputes continued in the colonies. Then they decided to do away with the European borders 'set aside the conflict over borders and tried to get united and plunder the world together'.

Then the Europeans needed theological unity and a base from which to pursue their new colonialism. 'Both are manifested in the establishment of the Zionist regime ... which was masterminded in Europe and the USA'.

He mentions truths that many in Europe and the US find unsettling: 'We can question God and Godliness of the Universe but we may not question the reasons why the Zionist regime was established. ... The only thing sacred in Europe is the Zionist regime ... and we are not permitted to question the Holocaust ... if you insult Jesus, nothing will happen to you, nobody will sue you. The new divinity is Zionism'.

He further questions: 'Why is Palestine unique? It is the heart of the Middle East', and he says the purpose of the Crusades was to control world trade.

Another reason why Palestine is unique is that the four prophets emerged from the Middle East, the cross-road where the world meets.

The president lashes out about the lie that Jews bought Palestinian lands because it was British deceit that enabled the establishing of 'a fake regime', which was enabled by the creation of the Holocaust myth. By 1948 the colonisers had arrived, which provoked the feelings and sentiments of the people living in Palestine. Asking questions about the Holocaust is then not permitted, but the President asks: 'What has the Holocaust to do with any country in the world? ... Now the Europeans have set conditions that we must work with the Zionist regime, which has become an instrument used to dominate people. Argentina has relatively few Jews, but their influence there is significant. ... The very same colonial powers, the plunderers and murderers now wear the mask of human rights'.

Then he mentions the obvious on which western media outlets remain silent: 'Is there any dictatorship not supported by the US? Is there any freedom-loving country not hated by the US? ... Plundering these days is a pre-planned process ... the World Bank creates difficulties for countries. The US prints fiat money. ... Today the Zionist regime is an agent in the hands of western powers ... the Zionist regime violates all rules ... when the Zionist regime does something wrong, nothing happens. When it publicly says it will assassinate someone – it does it. In Teheran it has assassinated scientists. The Zionist regime is the only holy thing in the minds of colonialist powers.'

The President recounts how the Soviet Union declined and then sided with capitalism its once arch enemy. He sees the liberation of Palestine as the cause for all 'freedom loving people' that unites everyone in the world.

- continued in Newsletter No 596.